

**TESTIMONY OF**

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**U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

**BEFORE**

**HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON BORDER, MARITIME, AND GLOBAL**  
**COUNTERTERRORISM**

**AND**

**HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

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Chairmen Cuellar and Engel, Ranking Members Miller and Mack, and members of the Subcommittees, it is a privilege and an honor to appear before you today to discuss the work of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), particularly the tremendous dedication of our men and women in the field.

My testimony today focuses on CBP's efforts to increase overall border security as well as CBP's partnerships and cooperative efforts with the Government of Mexico. These efforts are key components of the National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy in which CBP plays a crucial role. With greater resources than ever before along the southwest border and historic partnerships with Mexico, I am confident that these efforts have yielded concrete results. That said, we will continue to build upon our capabilities to further improve the security of our borders. Key to our success is our ability to leverage partnerships with federal, state, local and tribal governments in the United States, as well as with our Mexican counterparts. Our work is transnational, and we look to leverage our combined strengths to combat violence along the southwest border.

CBP has a workforce of over 58,000 employees and is the largest uniformed federal law enforcement agency in the country. During the first six months of FY 2010, CBP seized nearly half a million pounds of drugs and encountered more than 113,000 inadmissible aliens at our ports of entry. We also seized over 1.3 million pounds of drugs, made 245,000 apprehensions, and seized more than \$8 million in currency between our ports of entry. Compared to previous years, CBP has seen the overall apprehensions of illegal aliens decrease from our highest point of over one million apprehensions in FY 2000. These numbers demonstrate the effectiveness of our layered approach to security, comprised of a balance of tactical infrastructure, technology, and personnel at our borders.

Some Mexican cities along the border continue to experience high levels of drug-related violence. Despite isolated instances of violence, we have not seen violence on the U.S. side of the border on the same scale as the violence that our Mexican counterparts are battling every day. Today, Ciudad Juarez is considered the most dangerous city in the Western Hemisphere while, El Paso, right across the border, is considered one of the safest cities in the United States.

Still, violence on the U.S. side of the border remains a threat. Our personnel – among the most highly trained and best equipped in the United States – are poised to meet it.

### *Border Security between the Ports of Entry*

In deploying resources between the ports of entry, the Border Patrol seeks to incorporate the appropriate mix of tactical infrastructure, technology, and personnel to allow us to confront the criminal element. This three-pronged strategic balance of resources reflects the reality that one of these elements cannot, in and of itself, secure our nation's borders. Personnel provide the flexibility to engage the criminal element; tactical infrastructure supports response by either providing access to the Border Patrol or extending the time needed for the response; and technology allows us to detect entries and to identify and classify threats.

Over the past year, we have significantly strengthened each of the three major elements of our border security approach. Currently we have over 20,000 Border Patrol Agents on board nationwide, more than ever before in the history of the Border Patrol. As of May 14, 2010, we had approximately 646 miles of fencing constructed along the southwest border. We have purchased and deployed 41 mobile surveillance systems (MSSs) to provide added radar and camera coverage along the borders, with plans to purchase additional off-the-shelf technology in FY 2010 and FY 2011. The work performed by CBP's Office of Air and Marine (OAM) augments these systems, providing 284 aircraft and 253 marine vessels located at 79 operating branches, units, and support sites across the nation. CBP additionally uses six Unmanned Aerial Systems (UASs) and associated ground control stations as a more sustained surveillance platform. CBP has been working extensively with the Federal Aviation Administration on expanding UAS flights into airspace along the Texas / Mexico border, and recently obtained approval for UAS flights in West Texas effective June 1, 2010.

CBP's Border Patrol International Liaison Units continue to play an integral part in the Border Violence Protocols established between the U.S. and Mexico to improve communication and ensure timely deployment of resources on both sides of the southwest border and maintain positive working relationships with their Mexican counterparts. These alliances increase border

security and ensure expedited response times to critical border incidents through coordinated efforts with Mexican authorities, as well as federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

### *Border Security at the Ports of Entry*

The FY 2010 President's Budget requested additional CBP Officers, Border Patrol agents, and support for the expansion of CBP's License Plate Reader program, which assists in combating southbound firearms and currency smuggling. Congress provided those funds, and additionally provided funds for Non-Intrusive Inspection equipment, as well as additional Border Patrol agents and CBP Officers particularly to staff outbound operations. CBP remains committed to continuing southbound border enforcement efforts to combat the smuggling of firearms and currency to Mexico.

In March 2009, CBP created the Outbound Programs Division within its Office of Field Operations. This division creates plans to stem the outbound flow of firearms, currency, stolen vehicles, and fugitives from the United States. CBP also increased its use of "pulse and surge" strategies for outbound operations on the southwest border. Current statistics show an increase in the effectiveness of interdicting outbound currency since the start of increased, focused outbound operations: \$11.1 million in currency was seized in FY 2007, \$10.1 million in FY 2008, and \$37.1 million in FY 2009. In FY 2011, we will continue to strengthen the use of these operations along the southwest border and to build on the current cooperative efforts with federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies.

### *Increased Partnerships with Mexico*

While we have worked to increase our border security efforts at home, we are continuing to enhance and build upon our robust partnerships with our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere. A key component of these efforts is the Mérida Initiative, a multi-year assistance plan to help Mexico, Central America, the Dominican Republic and Haiti combat the threats of drug trafficking, transnational crime, and money laundering. In FY 2009, CBP established an inter-office Mérida Committee to coordinate with other federal law enforcement components, the

rest of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of State, and the Department of Justice on implementation actions.

CBP has also led several training efforts with various Mexican government entities. One effort involves currency, narcotics, and firearms detection training of Mexican Customs Canine Detection Units at the Canine Center in El Paso, Texas. We began this training in January 2010 and will conclude it in August 2010. Through this effort, CBP will train 44 canine detection teams, including six canine trainers. In addition, officers of the Mexico Secretariat of Public Safety (SSP) stationed in Nogales, Mexico, have been trained by CBP in urban close quarters combat, first aid, all-terrain vehicle operation, and hidden compartments detection. This training will enhance the capabilities of Mexican authorities in performing their missions.

In addition, CBP officers are providing advanced non-intrusive inspection training for SSP officers on backscatter X-ray vans in Mexico City. This training began on April 19, 2010 and ended on May 21, 2010, and occurred in a series of five week-long classes with 10 SSP officers attending each class. In order to streamline operations and allow for greater local interoperability, CBP officers are training local Mexican Customs officers on basic inspection and interdiction techniques, known as Basic Border Interdiction Training. The training is conducted by CBP officers stationed at a U.S. Port of Entry, for classes of eight to 10 Mexican Customs officers from the corresponding Mexican port of entry (e.g., Nuevo Laredo for Laredo training). There are nine training sessions planned between April and August 2010, three of which have been completed to date.

In addition to our engagements here in the United States, CBP has an Attaché office located at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. This office oversees CBP operations in Mexico, including border operational support at and between the ports of entry, bilateral coordination to secure our shared border, as well as training for Mexican government agencies. Additionally, the attaché's office is the CBP Commissioner's representative in Mexico and provides CBP subject matter expertise to the ambassador and interagency groups within the U.S. embassy in Mexico City in support of the U.S. government's trade, travel and security agendas. Interagency

cooperation at the embassy level is essential to ensure that the right structures and mechanisms are in place to oversee the implementation of Mérida programs.

In order to increase information-sharing, CBP's Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination (OIOC) has placed an intelligence analyst in Mexico City at an SSP facility for a mutual 30-day utility assessment. This initial deployment has increased integration between U.S. and Mexican intelligence efforts. CBP and SSP will evaluate their long-term requirements to assess whether the post should be extended or become permanent.

CBP continues to work with the Mexican government in the development of increased ground-based law enforcement surveillance and interdiction capabilities, including the detection of U.S./Mexican border air intrusions. The primary means of detecting air intrusions is a large radar network, monitored at CBP's Air and Marine Operations Center (AMOC) in Riverside, California. Personnel at the AMOC detect northbound aircraft that land just south of the U.S./Mexico border or continue into U.S. airspace, and coordinate appropriate CBP and or Mexican ground-based interdiction forces to bring these situations to a law enforcement resolution. This coordination has been particularly effective with the emerging threat faced by the use of ultra-light aircraft by drug smuggling organizations. Neither country's ultra-light aircraft detection capability is perfect, but with added cooperation we are more effective in the performance of our collaborative mission to detect and combat these operations.

Another coordinated effort is the Operation Against Smugglers Initiative on Safety and Security (OASISS), a bi-national initiative designed to increase the ability of the U.S. and Mexican governments to prosecute alien smugglers and human traffickers on both sides of the border. Conducted in cooperation with Mexico's Attorney General's Office (PGR), through OASISS, select alien smuggling cases that are declined by United States Attorney's Offices are subsequently turned over to the Government of Mexico for prosecution under Mexico's judicial system. Since its inception on August 17, 2005, the OASISS program has generated 2,031 cases and led to the prosecution of 2,290 principal defendants in Mexico.

CBP will continue to assist the Government of Mexico in maintaining a counter-drug effort, including command, control, communications and information support.

### *Increased Partnerships in the United States*

As we have enhanced our collaboration with our neighbors to the south, CBP also has continued to build upon our partnerships within the United States. Initiated in September 2009, the Operation Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT) is a multi-agency operation in the Sonora-Arizona Corridor involving over 50 federal, tribal, state, and local law enforcement and public safety organizations. ACTT employs a collaborative enforcement approach against criminal organizations, capitalizing on the capabilities and resources of our strategic partners. The intent is to deny, degrade, disrupt, and ultimately dismantle criminal organizations and their ability to operate; engage communities to reduce their tolerance of illegal activity; and establish a secure and safe border environment, which will ultimately improve the quality of life of affected communities. While ACTT's initial focus is on Arizona, as it continues to evolve, focused operations will transition to other operational corridors.

CBP continues to work with its partners in the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area centers to expand the ability of the United States government to exploit information from federal law enforcement agencies to target and disrupt drug traffickers and drug trafficking organizations. These operations utilize established locations to gather information regarding travel patterns to provide actionable intelligence on drug trafficking and smuggling activity with a nexus to the border. To further these operations, CBP has established positions at the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Fusion Center, and the DEA Special Operations Division.

These partnerships enhance interaction with the Intelligence Community and law enforcement agencies to more effectively facilitate the collection, analysis and dissemination of actionable drug-related intelligence in support of drug trafficking and money laundering investigations throughout the southwest border, Mexico and the U.S. CBP remains a partner with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the Border Enforcement Security Task

Forces to prevent the illegal flow of drugs, weapons, and currency across the southwest border, including the interdiction of outbound shipments of firearms and bulk currency.

### **Conclusion**

Chairmen and members of the Subcommittees, thank you for this opportunity to testify about the work of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and particularly about our collaborative efforts with the Government of Mexico to increase security along the southwest border. CBP is committed to securing our nation's borders and safeguarding our way of life. The border is a dynamic environment and we strive to meet the demands of today, as well as the challenges of tomorrow.

I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.